

VZCZCXYZ0000
OO RUEHWEB

DE RUEHSF #1075/01 2481540
ZNY SSSS ZZH
O 051540Z SEP 07
FM AMEMBASSY SOFIA
TORUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD IMMEDIATE 0142
INFO RUEAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 0711
RUEHTH/AMEMBASSY ATHENS1427
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0133
RUEHSL/AMEMBASSY BRATISLAVA 0323
RUEHBS/AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS 028
RUEHBM/AMEMBASSY BUCHAREST 0173
RUEHUP/AMEMBASSY BUDAPEST 0538
RUEHCP/AMEMBASSY COPENHAEN 0486
RUEHDM/AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS 0087
RUEHDL/AMEMBASSY DUBLIN 0035
RUEHBUL/AMEMBASSY KABUL 0035
RUEHKV/AMEMBASSY KYIV 0015
RUEHKU/AMEMBASSY KUWAIT 0058
RUEHLI/AMEMBASSY LISBON 0092
RUEHLJ/AMEMBASSY LJUBLJANA 0560
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON 0227
RUEHLE/AMEMBASSY LUXEMBOURG 0130
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 0635
RUEHMO/AMEMBASSY MOSCOW 0590
RUEHNY/AMEMBASSY OSLO 0313
RUEHOT/AMEMBASSY OTTAWA 0337
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0269
RUEHPG/AMEMBASSY PRAGUE 0389
RUEHRA/AMEMBASSY RIGA 0288
RUEHRO/AMEMBASSY ROME 0493
RUEHVJ/AMEMBASSY SARAJEVO 0057
RUEHSQ/AMEMBASSY SKOPJE 1988
RUEHTL/AMEMBASSY TALLINN 0271
RUEHSI/AMEMBASSY TBILISI 0235
RUEHVI/AMEMBASSY VIENNA 1176
RUEHVL/AMEMBASSY VILNIUS 0297
RUEHWR/AMEMBASSY WARSAW 0468
RUEHVB/AMEMBASSY ZAGREB 0963
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 4235

S E C R E T SOFIA 001075

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/05/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [BU](#) [IZ](#)

SUBJECT: (S) BULGARIA ANXIOUS TO OPEN EMBASSY IN IRAQ, BUT
SECURITY IS PARAMOUNT

Classified By: Deputy Chief of Mission, Alex Karagiannis
for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (S) Summary: MFA Director Petko Doykov and Valery Rachev, the Bulgarian Ambassador to Iraq, stressed that Bulgaria is eager to open an embassy in Baghdad, but remains unable to reach agreement with the Iraqi government on a suitable location. They expressed frustration with the Iraqi bureaucratic process, and hoped that the U.S. government might be able to assist in resolving the problem. The Bulgarians are flexible on the size and location of a future facility in Baghdad, so long as it is a secure, defensible location inside the International Zone with space for around three staff members and housing for the Ambassador. Director Doykov mentioned the Bulgarian interest in opening a consulate facility of some type in Erbil, as well, but said they could only consider such a move after reaching a viable solution in Baghdad. End Summary.

12. (S) In a September 5, 2007 meeting, Middle East and Africa Director Petko Doykov and Valery Rachev, the Bulgarian Ambassador to Iraq (currently working from Sofia) both

stressed that Bulgaria is anxious to open an embassy in Baghdad. They explained that the government of Bulgaria owns a large compound in the Mansour district, outside the International Zone, but this property was thoroughly looted and sustained significant damage. This facility remains the Bulgarian government's long-term plan for an embassy location, but in the short-term it is unusable since it is located in a very dangerous area and would require extensive renovation. For the short to medium-term, Bulgaria is seeking a small, defensible facility inside of the International Zone, with enough space for, at most, three to five officers and housing for the Ambassador.

13. (S) The Bulgarians stressed that security was paramount, since the Ministry of Foreign Affairs would never allow the Ambassador to take up his post if there were doubts about the security of the facility. Ideally, the location would be separated from any major streets and would have a single, controllable point of access. The less renovation work required the better, since a renovation could significantly delay the process of getting the Ambassador into the country. But in terms of size and location, the Bulgarians are very flexible, saying they would be willing to adapt to the location available. Director Doykov and Ambassador Rachev said they are hoping to have a location settled and ready for operation by no later than December 2007 or January 2008, but they stressed that they would much rather wait for a suitable, secure facility than rush into an untenable situation.

14. (S) Ambassador Rachev explained that his first choice would be to move into the site that he had identified earlier this year, with the assistance of the U.S. Embassy in Baghdad. It was a 3200 square meter facility, located, he said, in "District 232, with coordinates 127.1". According to the Ambassador Rachev, this site was initially approved for Bulgaria, but was then "reassigned" by the Iraqi government without explanation. He is under the impression that this location is no longer an option, but if it were somehow still available, it would be his top choice. (Comment: Though Rachev did not say it openly, the Bulgarians are still smarting over how this property was pulled from them.)

15. (S) The Iraqi Ambassador to Bulgaria presented a new option in a letter to the Bulgarians on June 28. According to the letter, the Council of Ministers approved a plot with the registration number 75/38 and located in "the urban area of Karadat Mariam in Baghdad". The letter says that this property is currently occupied and its ownership is under dispute. Additionally, according to the letter, the property would only be available to the Bulgarians for a maximum of six months, after which time the Commission for Resolution of Real Property Disputes (CRRPD) would have to approve any further use of the land. In light of these facts, the Bulgarians are not optimistic that this site would be suitable, and in fact, they have not been able to learn from their Iraqi counterparts, the exact location of this property, nor even the location of the "Kardat Mariam" neighborhood. Rachev's opinion is that this option was presented to them as a goodwill gesture by the Iraqi Ambassador to Bulgaria, through his family connections. Rachev is suspicious of this option since he is not convinced that it has been cleared through appropriate channels in the Iraqi government.

16. (S) Petkov was very interested in U.S. opinions on the Kurdish regions in the North of Iraq, and mentioned that the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry had received overtures from Kurdish delegations on issues such as tourism and trade. He mentioned that Bulgaria had interest in initiating some form of diplomatic representation in Erbil, but said they could only consider such a move after reaching a viable solution for an embassy in Baghdad.

17. (S) Rachev noted that 2008 is the fiftieth anniversary of diplomatic relations between Iraq and Bulgaria and suggested that this could be used as a platform to step up political,

economic and cultural programs between the two countries. The lack of a suitable embassy facility, remained a significant obstacle to this, he explained. In closing, he praised U.S. support for his past efforts to find a suitable location for a new embassy, but expressed exasperation with the Iraqi bureaucratic process. Any additional support or direction the United States could provide in this regard, he said, would be critical to reaching a final solution.

18. (C) Comment: The government is sustaining its commitment in Iraq despite 70% popular opposition to deployments there. Helping Bulgaria get a secure facility in the I.Z. would be a major, and much appreciated, boost as it stands firm with us.

Beyrle